

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

This information package is compiled to commemorate Religious Freedom Day, January 16, 2012

Information Package
January 2012

U.S. Embassy Jakarta Mission Statement

Based on mutual respect and shared values, the U.S. Mission works with Indonesia to strengthen democracy, sustain the environment, promote prosperity, enhance understanding and ensure security for our people, our nations, and our region

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What Is Religious Freedom?

"Everyone shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion. This right shall include freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice, and freedom, either individually or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in worship, observance, practice, and teaching"

-Article 18(1) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

Indicators of a Lack of Religious Freedom

The International Religious Freedom (IRF) Act defines five violations of religious freedom:

Arbitrary prohibitions on, restrictions of, or punishment for:

- (i) assembling for peaceful religious activities such as worship, preaching, and prayer, including arbitrary registration requirements;
- ii) speaking freely about one's religious beliefs;
- (iii) changing one's religious beliefs and affiliation;
- (iv) possession and distribution of religious literature, including Bibles and other sacred texts;
- v) raising one's children in the religious teachings and practices of one's choice.

When reviewing a country's state of religious freedom, we look for laws or policies that:

- 1) restrict the right to hold a religious belief;
- 2) limit the right to change religious belief;
- 3) restrict the freedom to have an allegiance to a religious leader;
- 4) disparage individuals or groups on the basis of their religion;
- 5) discriminate against religious persons in education, the military, em-

- ployment opportunities or in health services;
- 6) require the designation of religion on passports or national identity documents, either overtly or in code;
- 7) restrict religious assembly;
- 8) restrict religious expression.

Countries of Particular Concern

According to the IRF Act (Section 402), a country is designated by the Department of State as a Country of Particular Concern (CPC) if its government is determined to have engaged in or tolerated particularly severe violations

of religious freedom. The IRF Act defines particularly severe violations of religious freedom as systematic, ongoing, egregious violations.

The Act provides a list of examples of such activities: torture or cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment; extended detention without charges; causing the disappearance of persons by abduction or clandestine detention; and other flagrant denial of the right to life, liberty, or security.

Source: <http://goo.gl/9rQlv>

Related link

•International Religious Freedom Act of 1998
<http://goo.gl/mf8ME>

Religious Freedom Day

Each year, since 1993, the American President declares January 16th to be Religious Freedom Day, and, as in 2005, calls upon Americans to "observe this day through appropriate events and activities in homes, schools, and places of worship."

The day is the anniversary of the passage, in 1786, of the Virginia Statute on Religious Freedom. Thomas Jefferson drafted the legis-

lation and considered it one of his greatest achievements. It stopped the practice of taxing people to pay for the support of the local clergy, and it protected the civil rights of people to express their religious beliefs without suffering discrimination.

Read more about the Day, activities to commemorate it, Virginia Statute etc. at: <http://goo.gl/swOrw>

Mutual Respect Crucial For Religious Freedom

Freedom of religion is a vital component of stable, democratic societies everywhere. Each year the U.S. Department of State releases a Report on International Religious Freedom (State Department website) to document the ongoing struggle for people around the world to practice their religion freely.

Hannah Rosenthal, the State Department's special envoy to monitor and combat anti-Semitism, and Farah Pandith, the State Department's special representative to Muslim communities, work together to promote religious acceptance, respect and tolerance around the world. The two are now working together on an initiative to further promote discussion and understanding among Jewish and Muslim communities.

In honor of Religious Freedom Day 2011, Special Envoy Rosenthal and Special Representative Pandith sat down with America.gov to talk about their work and the importance of promoting religious freedom.

Q: What does religious freedom mean to you?



Special Envoy Hannah Rosenthal: I am the child of a Holocaust survivor. And

so, coming from a family — a very small family, because my father was the only survivor — the notion that this country guarantees you freedom and protection, and protects our freedom of expression, of association, and of religion, has been freedom for me. That's what it represents to

me. It's in my DNA, it's in the country's DNA, because it's fundamental to human rights.



Special Representative Farah Pandith: As I think about this country and I think about the

strengths of this country, this is the greatest strength: the ability for any human being in America to be able to practice their faith freely. To be able to express themselves freely, to be able to have open discourse in a nonviolent way about their life, about their faith, about their identity, is central and very important. Our Constitution protects the rights of every citizen in America, and freedom of religion, and freedom of faith are central to that Constitution and those principles. I will also say from a very personal point of view, it's made our country very rich. It's a wonderful thing to be able to be an American, and to be able to have the opportunity to learn from each other, people of different faiths. To be in a country where a synagogue and a church, a temple and a mosque can be side by side. To be able to go to a friend's house and share a Seder, at the same time to invite somebody of a different faith to break fast [during Ramadan]. That's what America is.

Q: How does religious freedom support free and open societies?

Pandith: You have to be able to express yourself. You have to be able to understand that not all Muslims think the same way, that you can have a lot of

diversity in thoughts and expression and identity. And so the ability to be able to express yourself, the ability to be able to have conversations in a way that's respectful of each other — this idea of mutual respect is central to the way in which a society must function, and that actually makes for a stronger and more robust community, period.

Q: What is the best thing individuals can do to promote religious freedom in their countries?

Pandith: So what we are doing in the upcoming year is taking a trip overseas to various countries that have a history of tolerance and respect for each other, Jewish and Muslim communities that have been working together, but we're also invigorating the young generation. We're asking them to give their time, to volunteer, by starting a campaign: 2011 Hours Against Hate, in which a Jew and a Muslim will come to the table, volunteer their time. A Jew will give their time to perhaps work at a nursery with young Muslim kids or give a lecture at a school to volunteer in a Muslim community. A Muslim will also then go out and go to a community of Jews and do something that helps that community in some way, whether it's helping build a school or it's donating their hours to feeding the poor — whatever it happens to be. But we're rallying the young generation to make a difference. And we understand how important it is that we think about this idea of mutual respect, that we start the year in a way

that says we can do better, and this is our small way of making an impact in that area.

Rosenthal: I think in today's world, where the communications are so different than my generation is used to, and hate is communicated and wonderful things are communicated through the new technologies, we have to make sure when bad things are being communicated that they are confronted right away. They are condemned, they are called out, and we can't just push delete. I think that becomes a very important thing, and stopping one dinner table conversation that goes wrong or expresses intolerance and calls other religious beliefs less than, that's a step forward. One person at a time. And that's why this initiative, of encouraging people to donate 2,011 — like the year — hours of their time to make a difference, it will make a huge difference.

Source: <http://goo.gl/sxtJK>

"My Administration will continue to oppose growing trends in many parts of the world to restrict religious expression. Faith can bring us closer to one another, and our freedom to practice our faith and follow our conscience is central to our ability to live in harmony."

President Barack Obama

International Religious Freedom Report, July-December, 2010 - Indonesia

State Department's Office of International Religious Freedom, September 13, 2011

The constitution and other laws and policies protect religious freedom and, in practice, the government generally respected the religious freedom of the six officially recognized religions. However, certain laws, policies, and official actions restricted religious freedom, and in some instances the government failed to protect persons from discrimination and abuse based on religion. The government placed restrictions on non-recognized religious groups and on some groups considered "deviant."

The government's respect for religious freedom re-

mained unchanged. The government prosecuted some individuals responsible for religion-related violence in Sulawesi and the Maluku. During the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, the government prevented several vigilante actions. However, it sometimes failed to prevent abuse and combat discrimination against religious groups by non state actors, and at times failed to punish perpetrators of violence. Some hardline Muslim groups opposed to religious pluralism engaged in violent activity against other religious groups and activities deemed contradictory to their view of Islamic values.

The central government holds authority over religious matters but made no effort in some regions to overturn local laws restricting rights otherwise provided for in the constitution. Members of minority religious groups continued to experience some official discrimination in the form of administrative difficulties, often in the context of civil registration of marriages and births and/or the issuance of identity cards.

There were reports of societal abuses and discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice. According to a leading nongovernmental organiza-

tion (NGO), there were more than 50 attacks against members of the Ahmadiyya sect during 2010 and more than 75 attacks against Christians. Some hard line Muslim groups used violence and intimidation to close several churches, some of which were unregistered with the government. Some of the churches remained closed at the end of the reporting period.

Read more:

English version:

<http://goo.gl/p2Qg9>

Indonesia version:

<http://goo.gl/p1VB1>

Related link:

The Office of International Religious Freedom

<http://goo.gl/B2JYb>

Annual Report of the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom 2011 - Indonesia

(Covering April 1, 2010 – March 31, 2011)

FINDINGS: Over the past decade, Indonesia has evolved into a stable democracy with stronger human rights protections than at any time in the nation's history. The government of President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono has taken positive steps to address terrorism and past sectarian violence, end a civil war in Aceh, and curtail terrorist networks. However, religious tolerance has come under increasing strain in recent years. Religious minorities have experienced patterns of intimidation, discrimination, and societal violence often per-

petuated by groups espousing intolerance and extremism under the banner of Islamic orthodoxy. The activities of extremist groups are sometimes tolerated by segments of the Indonesian government, including the police. In addition, despite legal protections for religious freedom, national laws and provincial decrees have been used to restrict rather than advance the freedom of religion and belief.

Based on these concerns, USCIRF continues to place Indonesia on its Watch List in 2011. Indonesia has been

on the Commission's Watch List since 2002.

Indonesia's well-known tradition of religious tolerance and pluralism is being challenged by religious radicalism and extremist groups who have found converts in the country, leading to sectarian and societal violence, terrorism, and religious freedom violations. Indonesians rejected extremism at the polls, but it often goes unchallenged by many political, civic, and religious leaders.

During the reporting period, nearly 40 places of

worship belonging to religious minorities were closed, either forcibly by extremist groups or through the denial of building permits by government officials.

Extremist groups also instigated violence against religious minorities, including an attack that led to the death of three Ahmadiyah adherents.

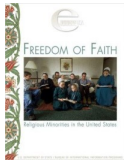
New provincial bans on Ahmadiyah practice have been put in place in East and West Java and South Sumatra.

Read more:

<http://goo.gl/nP0uS>

Resources

Electronic Publications



eJournalUSA: Freedom of Faith/Bureau of IIP, U.S. Department of State, August 2008.

The principle of religious freedom is a cherished right in the United States, one that has historical roots older than the formation of the nation itself. Read more at: <http://goo.gl/JJhKd>

eJournalUSA: Being Muslim in America/Bureau of IIP, U.S. Department of State, March 2009.

With freedom, faith, and hard work, each successive wave of immigrants has added its distinctive contributions to the American story. And today, this story is the Muslim-American story too. Read more at: <http://goo.gl/pvocq>

Photo Galleries

The American Religious Landscape/ Bureau of IIP,

U.S. State Department. America has a diverse religious landscape, and immigration is transforming it even more. 15 pictures of the gallery explained it. Find the pictures at: <http://goo.gl/7i8MA>

Winter Celebrations Mirror America's Diversity/ Bureau of IIP, U.S. State Department

Americans celebrate a wide range of winter holidays that reflect the nation's cultural heritage. Find the pictures at: <http://goo.gl/c2eaM>

Videos

Religious Diversity: Land Called Paradise/Bureau of IIP, U.S. State Department. In December 2007, over 2,000 American Muslims were asked what they would wish to say to the rest of the world. Find their answers in this music video at: <http://goo.gl/muzVE>

Religious Diversity: Training for a Religious

Calling/Bureau of IIP, U.S. State Department.

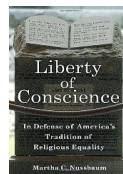
Worldwide students of Hartford Seminary & Yale Diversity School share their experiences on studying in the ecumenical interfaith environment.

Watch the video at: <http://goo.gl/kERhQ>

Three Faiths Building Community/ Bureau of IIP, U.S. State Department, July 2008.

This video shows the interfaith interaction in the U.S. Watch the video at: <http://goo.gl/5HtUh>

IRC Collections



Liberty of Conscience: In Defense of America's Tradition of Religious Equality/ Martha Nussbaum. Basic Books, 2010.

ISBN: 978-8178242002

This book tells the story of

America's great tradition of religious freedom.

Religious Freedom and the Constitution/ Christopher L. Eisgruber. Harvard University Press, 2007 ISBN: 978-0674023055

In disputes about faith-based social services, public money for religious schools, the Pledge of Allegiance, Ten Commandments monuments, the theory of evolution, and many other topics, angry contestation threatens to displace America's historic commitment to religious freedom. Part of the problem, the authors argue, is that constitutional analysis of religious freedom has been hobbled by the idea of "a wall of separation" between church and state.

For more titles of IRC collection, please check our online catalog: <http://69.63.217.22/U10086Staff/OPAC/index.asp>

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